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## **L.A. school board delays vote on massive budget cuts**

**The superintendent, however, is allowed to begin preparing layoff notices for thousands of teachers and support staff as talks continue to find a way to save adult and early education programs.**

By Stephen Ceasar, Los Angeles Times

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After daylong protests, the Los Angeles Board of Education delayed a vote Tuesday on a worst-case \$6-billion budget plan that would cause thousands of employees to lose their jobs, end all adult education classes, and remove funding for early education and arts programs.

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The board instead directed Supt. John Deasy to work with his staff and teacher unions to develop a proposal that avoids eliminating these and other programs. The extra time will allow the parties to consider new state budget information, said board member Steve Zimmer, who proposed the delay.

"There is no public education without adult education, without early education, without the arts," Zimmer said to loud cheers from the packed board room.

"There's a difference between drastic cuts and catastrophic cuts," he said.

The current plan would bridge a \$557-million deficit for next year in the nation's second-largest school system. Even if it was approved by the school board, a final version of the budget probably would be months away.

Though the board delayed the cuts, it also moved to allow the superintendent to begin preparing layoff notices for thousands of teachers and support staff. The letters are required by state law, but they would be sent later than usual, by March 8, to allow negotiations to play out and possibly mitigate the number of notices sent, Zimmer said.

The pink slips could be sent to all adult and early education teachers and teachers who have yet to earn tenure protections, as well as nurses, librarians, school psychologists, counselors and others.

The district has had more than 8,000 layoffs over the last four years but eventually hired many back.

In an effort to increase revenue, the board also directed Deasy to prepare a parcel tax proposal on properties within district boundaries. The proposal would have to be approved by the board before being placed on the

ballot in June, November or March 2013.

United Teachers Los Angeles President Warren Fletcher, who addressed the board as scores of teachers protested outside, said he was appreciative that the board did not automatically adopt a series of cuts, but instead agreed to work together.

"We're not at the solution yet," he said. "We're at a point that the district is willing, it appears, to actually talk about shared solutions, actually move in the direction of responding to the community outcry."

Speaker after speaker, supporters of such programs as adult education, elementary-level arts instruction and early education, pleaded for the cuts to be avoided.

The meeting also drew a number of elected officials from across the county, including Los Angeles Councilmen Richard Alarcon and Eric Garcetti, a mayoral candidate. It also included at least one rock star, former Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum, who argued against cuts to the arts.

Parent Jose Lara told the board that the elimination of adult and early childhood programs affect some of the most vulnerable populations — poor, working-class families who need basic skills and child care.

"This is an educational injustice," he told the board. "You cannot balance the budget on the backs of the poor and working class."

At the morning protest, Carmelita Ramirez-Sanchez said her son, a fifth-grader, went through the early education programs and now is at the top of his class. She worries that her 3-year-old, who is now in the program, won't have the same foundation.

The programs, she said, are available only to children whose parents either work or go to school full time, leaving many without any form of child care.

Jill Echevarria, a teacher at Aragon Elementary School in Cypress Park, said she has received layoff notices the last two years.

"I think a lot of cuts that they need can be made inside that building," she said, pointing to the district headquarters.

Receiving a notice devastates a teacher's morale, Echevarria said.

"It makes you think, 'Why am I working so hard?' " she said.

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